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USSR WORK ON CURARE SUBSTITUTES

[Comment: The following is the full text of an account of the 99th Meeting of the Section of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Moscow Society of Physiologists, Biochemists, and Pharmacologists, 20 June 1952.]

M. L. Rylova

P. M. Dozortseva, VNIKhFI (All-Union Scientific Research Chemico-pharmaceutical Institute imeni S. Ordzhonikidze), presented a report entitled "Alkaloids of Larkspur (Zh'ivnokost') as Possible Domestic Substitutes for Curare." Dozortseva emphasized the importance of curare and curare preparations for medicine and mentioned their uses in surgery, psychiatry, the clinical treatment of nerve diseases, and some infections and intoxications. She further stated that as a result of the efforts of Soviet scientists, domestic plants have been found that contain alkaloids which exhibit a curare activity. She then discussed in detail the pharmacological properties of the larkspur alkaloids delsemine and elatine, describing their effects on the transmission of nerve-muscle impulses, the cardiovascular system, the vegetative subdivision of the nervous system, and some other divisions and functions of the organism. She also compared the properties of alkaloids from larkspur with those of curare alkaloids and aconite alkaloids (aconitine).

A. Ya. Altamyshev presented data indicating that Tyan'-Shan aconite is beneficial in expediting the healing of wounds which result in certain experimental affections, due to staphylococci, of the skin of rabbits.

D. I. Zakutinskiy emphasized the importance of the achievements of VNIKhFI in finding domestic substitutes for curare. According to Zakutinskiy, a further task will be comparative investigation of these substitutes, and a study of their individual properties on the basis of data obtained as a result of more thorough investigations pertaining to the physiological mechanism of their action.

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G. M. Pershin remarked on the exceptional productivity of the collaboration between pharmacologists and chemists in the development of new drugs.

M. D. Mashkovskiy stated that the USSR demand for drugs that have a curare activity is completely satisfied by domestic substitutes. Among the substitutes are synthetic and partly synthetic substances as well as drugs of botanical origin. Diplacin (diplatin), in addition to being a curare substitute, is superior to curare in many respects: it has a wider range of therapeutic activity and applicability. A detailed investigation of new drugs in regard to their influence on the functioning of the reflex arc, on the biochemical processes in muscles, and on other functions is beyond the scope of the activity of a single laboratory. Other pharmacological institutions [in addition to VNIKhFI] ought to participate in the work in question.

In concluding the meeting, Professor V. A. Sanotskiy, chairman, again emphasized the importance of the work of VNIKhFI in developing domestic substitutes for curare.

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